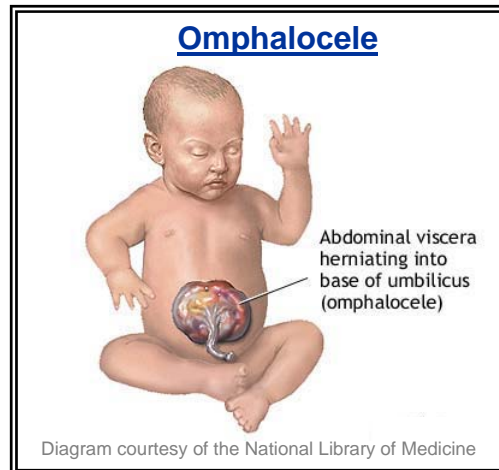


Omphalocele

What is omphalocele?

An omphalocele is a birth defect that occurs when the **abdominal contents** (such as the intestines or stomach) **herniate** (rupture or protrude) through the **umbilicus** (belly button or navel) and are exposed on the outside of the body. Normally, a small hole is present in the abdomen during a baby's development; this hole usually closes early in pregnancy. When this hole fails to close during pregnancy, an **omphalocele** is the result. The amount of abdominal contents that are exposed outside the body may range from a small section of the intestines to all of the intestines and the stomach.



An omphalocele is similar to another birth defect called **gastroschisis**. Patients with an omphalocele usually have a **peritoneal sac** (thin layer of tissue) covering the exposed organs. Patients with gastroschisis do not have this protective covering; in addition, the abdominal opening in gastroschisis is on one side of the umbilicus.

Approximately 1 out of every 5,000 babies born each year have an omphalocele.

What causes omphaloceles?

Currently, the exact cause of omphaloceles is not known. Younger mothers (under the age of 20) are more likely to have a child with an omphalocele.

Approximately 25 – 40% of babies with omphaloceles have additional birth defects. The birth defects most commonly associated with omphaloceles include **genetic conditions**, **congenital diaphragmatic hernia** (an opening in the muscle used for breathing), and **cardiac** (heart) **defects**.

How are omphaloceles treated?

Omphalocele can be surgically corrected. The surgeon will place the exposed abdominal contents back into the abdomen and close the opening in the abdominal wall. Your child's doctor(s) will discuss appropriate treatment options with you.

For more information

Children's Memorial Hospital (Chicago) - <http://www.childrensmemorial.org/depts/fetalhealth/omphalocele.asp>
Cincinnati Children's Hospital - <http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/health/info/abdomen/diagnose/omphalocele.htm>
MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia - <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000994.htm>

Sources: Cincinnati Children's Hospital, MedlinePlus